

SOLAR INFERNO AND THE EARTHBOUND ABYSS

Reza Negarestani

Abolishing Heliocentric Slavery

The marriage between the sublunary terrestrial slum and the Sun has become a **strictly monogamous model** that regulates not only ethics, politics and art but also the entire history of thought and organic activities. It is time to return to the **promiscuity** of the Earth as a dense constellation of interstellar rubbish with dead stars. Roaming the cosmos aimlessly with an Earth whose Sun is itself contingent upon the cosmic abyss, that is to say, it is **already-dead** – this is the geophilosophical art in which all human endeavors must be invested: to embrace the Earth as a **fractal clump** rather than an exotic blue marble, to think of it as a passing oval meteorite whose crater has already bored into the skin of astral corpses. The idea of ecological emancipation must be divorced from the simultaneously vitalistic and necrocratic relationship between the Earth and the Sun. It must instead be coupled with cosmic contingency as the principle of all ecologies. Only an ecology permeated with radical contingencies of the cosmic abyss can reinvent the Earth in the direction of the great outdoors. For such an ecology, **every moment is an apocalypse which cannot be culminated**, and the Sun is not the heart of darkness but that which cauterizes the gaping wound from which pulverizing contingencies (or climates) of the cosmic abyss bleed into our world. As much as the Earth must be divested of its conception as the ark of life, the Sun must also be stripped of both its stellar privileges and hegemonic ecological imports. For after all, the Sun is only an inevitable blind spot for the Earth that bars the

scope of the abyss. For this reason, the Sun should neither be embraced as the dark flame of excess nor glorified as a luminous end, but reconsidered and rediscovered as an infernal element in the chain of complicities which open the Earth into a universe that is more **weird** than infernal, its climatic events are more **asymptotically non-eventful** rather than catastrophically climatic, its exteriority is more **immanent to the inside** rather than the outside. **An Earth surveyed (ars terram)** by such a radical ecology can be reconceived as a circuitous part of a nested abyss, and for this reason, its somatic characteristics (the differentiation of its body into inorganic layers and bio-terrains) and consequently its geographic contingencies and ultimately histories are the products of an abyss for which all climates are convoluted and **detoured sloped-curves (klima)** which are asymptotic with the unclimatic depths of the universe and its cosmic contingencies. Ecologically speaking, in an abyssal cosmos where heliocentric slavery has been abolished, the aquatic vitality of the Earth is either a detoured expression of a starless-nature that appears as rotting slime or the earthbound abyss which erupts in the form of corrosive oil. Whereas Venice and its aquatic capitalism are asymptotically converging upon an indifferent nature which is a pit of slime and mold; its dry middle-eastern twin Dubai and its oily capitalism are plunged into the madness of petroleum brewed up by the deep chthonic earth. In either case, the cosmic abyss and its radical ecology find their blackening expression in the **water of life** where all climates (biological, social, political, etc.) are terminally determined by chemistry or the contingent dynamics of radical exteriority. It is in this sense that a capitalist life either driven forward by the tourism of water or the industrialism of oil becomes a perfect locus for chemical twists of an abyss whose weird ecology is nowhere better manifested than in the so-called potent water of life.

A History of Solar Bondage

According to the energetic models of psychology (Freud, Reich, Ferenczi, *et al.*) the organic system – by virtue of its conservative and economical nature – seeks to fixate upon the first exorbitant source of energy that it directly encounters. This source of energy must surpass the lifespan of the organic system and issue forth a problematic amount of energy that exceeds the capacity of the organic system. Consumption of this exorbitant energy, therefore, becomes a problem for the organism. For the organism, consequently, modes or courses of life are in fact solutions found and developed by the organism to confront the problem of consumption. In other words, ideas of how to live are reduced to solutions to afford the exorbitant energy. The more diverse the solutions of the organism become, the easier the organism can maneuver between different courses of life and the firmer the organism is fettered to its exorbitant source of energy. This growing dependency on the exorbitant source of energy through the ever-increasing shackles of life singularizes the exorbitant source of energy as the only model of dissipation for the organism i.e. the only model of death and the only way out. Accordingly, the exorbitant energy instigates and imposes plurality in modes of life but only in accordance with the conservative and economical nature of the organism. The plurality of life is enforced at the expense of monism in death. And it is the monism in death – as a mode of inflection upon the outside (or what is exterior to the organism) – that rigidly restricts the image of exteriority associated with the cosmic abyss and in doing so forestalls a radical change in life and its ventures.

The organism tends to die, or more accurately, tends to open to the exterior horizon by means of the same energetic models and channels from which it conservatively secures its vital economy. To put it simply, the organism tends to

use the same energetic model for its death – or openness to that which is exterior to it – as the model that it has previously used for conserving energy and living. This recurring energetic model is fundamentally established by the source of the exorbitant energy and thereby, implements both the traumatizing effects of excessive energy and the inherent limitations of the source of energy which itself is another interiorized horizon enveloped against its abyssal cosmic backdrop. Therefore, although life can manifest itself plurally as opportunities for diversification and complexification brought about by different economical ways for conservation of the exorbitant energy, death or binding exteriority is only possible in one and only one way. This way is both qualitatively and quantitatively restricted in that it strictly corresponds to the fundamental limitations of the exterior source of energy and how these limitations are increased in the conservative economy of the organism. Any image of exteriority that the exorbitant source of energy promises or creates for the organism will remain within the confines and limits of that source of energy itself.

For us, this exorbitant source of energy is the Sun and its solar economy. The solar excess has developed a conservative image of thought in which one can only dissipate or die according to the model of energetic dissipation that the Sun has engrained within the terrestrial organisms. One can afford numerous modes of conservation or live in different ways but must die solely in the way that has been dictated by the energetic model of dissipation inherent to the Sun. It is in this sense that Georges Bataille's model of general or non-restricted solar economy is itself a form of restricted economy whose restriction does not find its expression in its relatively diverse modes of living but in the rejection of those modes of death or binding exteriority which cannot be indexed by the economical correlation between the solar excess and the conservative structures

of the terrestrial biosphere. For the terrestrial biosphere, the dominant model of dying, or more precisely, 'openness to the outside' is limited to 'being open to the Sun', that is to say, finding a generally affordable consumptive solution to the problem of solar expenditure. To put it differently, openness to the Sun does not conjure a hyperbolic Icarian humanism as some might object but rather a restricted Inhumanism for which exteriority is only perpetuated by the solar economy and inflection upon death and exteriority is limited to dying by the Sun and through the dissipative model of energy that it dictates. For this reason, solar economy is a straitened model of openness or inflection upon death and exteriority insofar as it entails the possibility of pluralism in life only at the cost of a strict monism in death. A vector of thought configured by solar economy knows nothing of the freedom of alternatives in regard to death as a vector of exteriorization or loosening into the cosmic abyss. Hence, the Cartesian dilemma, 'What course in life shall I follow?' should be bastardized as 'Which way out shall I take?' It is the latter question that radically breaks away from life-oriented models of emancipation whose putative opportunities in life and dismissal of death are none other but manifests of heliocentric slavery.

The ecological emancipation in the direction of the great outdoors, a 'new Earth' (Deleuze and Guattari) or the earthbound abyss require not alternative ways of life – with which capitalism is grossly overwhelmed – but alternative ways of binding the exteriority of the cosmic abyss or inflection upon death (of both mind and matter). Whether identified as modes of radical openness (paths for loosening into the abyss) or inflection upon non-dialectical negativity (dying in ways other than those afforded by the organism), alternative ways of binding exteriority mobilize the terrestrial sphere according to climates of the cosmic abyss. Yet, as argued earlier, in terms of

the cosmic abyss, climates are pure contingencies and therefore, draw the limitopically convoluted trajectories along which various horizons of interiorities are undone and loosened into the yawning chasm. If solar economy and its associated capitalism are inflexibly monistic in death, it is because Sun itself is a contingency whose interiorized conception is in the process of loosening into the abyss – a contingency that tends to manifest as a necessity so as to inhibit the irruption of other contingencies qua climates. For the irruption of contingencies through another contingency – as in the case of a dying Sun – is a chemical journey in which the solar horizon breaks into innumerable other contingencies, each carrying thousands of turns and twists, giving the depth of the abyss a nested twist that is asymptotic with its radical exteriority. Life on Earth, in this sense, is a contingency begotten by the decaying Sun whose body, already a corpse, has been overridden by cosmic climates qua irruptive contingencies.

Capitalism, or the Market of the Sun on the Planet

Like all modes of slavery, heliocentrism has its own market strategy; it is called base-capitalism. For schizophrenic capitalism, whilst everything should be accelerated towards a techno-economic meltdown along paths of expenditure entrenched in solar economy, modes of life as ever more convoluting circuitous paths towards death must not only be embraced but also emphatically affirmed. The seemingly paradoxical proclivity of capitalism – that is to say, its concomitant dynamism towards thanatropic meltdown and its advocacy of lifestyles – amounts to the very simple fact that for the Sun the phenomenon of life on the planet is but a modal range of energy dissipation prescribed by the solar economy and afforded by organic systems. This does not merely suggest that death – especially for planetary entities – is inevitable

but that such death or vector of exteriorization is exclusively restricted to modes of energetic dissipation (modes of life) that the Sun imposes on the planet. Yet these modes of energetic dissipation which exteriorize Earth are themselves part of the economy of the Sun which also mark its economic restrictions and limits of affordability against its abyssal and exterior cosmic backdrop. Capitalism, in this sense, conceals its restricted economy in regard to the cosmic exteriority (or death) by overproducing modes or styles of life which are in fact different rates of energetic dissipation or circuitous paths of expenditure. To put it differently, capitalism which terrestrially envelops the restricted economy of the Sun in regard to death and exteriority masquerades as the so-called general and free economy in regard to life and the problem of consumption.

The interiority of life on Earth rests on the thermo-nuclear interiority of the Sun which itself is contingent upon its exterior cosmic backdrop. Solar capitalism is only a market for representing the Sun as both an inevitable and unfathomably rich exteriority for the planet and terrestrial life, marketing the energetic model of the Sun as the only way to the great outdoors of the abyss. Yet it is precisely the Sun that circumscribes the image of such outdoors and narrows the speculative opportunities ensued by thought's binding of radical exteriority. In line with the vitalistically pluralist and thanatropically monist regime of solar economy, Earth can be reinvented and recomposed only as a new planet or slave of the Sun whose life and death are emphatically determined by its star or exorbitant source of energy. On such a planet, the ventures of thought and art are burdened by a narrow scope in regard to cosmic exteriority imposed by the Sun as well as the axiomatic submission of terrestrial life to the empire of the Sun.

Just as the pluralist regime of life inherent to solar economy is parasitically hydrophilic, the indulgence of capitalism in lifestyles and vitalistic

detours also has an intimate affinity with terrestrial juices. The solar model of consumption can duplicate itself as the dominant energetic model wherever life emerges, that is to say, wherever water exists. Water can implement the energetic peculiarities of the solar climate in quite a vitalistic fashion and thus, re-enact the Sun's model of energy expenditure within manifestations of life. Capitalism, in a similar manner, sniffs out planetary waters so as to employ its models of accumulation and consumption through their chemical potencies. This is not only to use the hydraulic efficiency of terrestrial waters in order to propagate its markets and carry out its trades, but more importantly to overlap and associate its indulgences with the very definitions and foundations of life. Since terrestrial waters (or liquid forms in general) are closely associated with the formula of life, by investing in them and operating through them capitalism can also give a biopolitical sense of inevitability (in terms of growth and vitality) to its rules and activities. In dissolving into terrestrial waters, capitalism like solar energy can create climates or contingencies of its own on the planet, triggering the rise of new territories, lines of migrations and reformations. Yet water is an open receiver of chemistry as the applied dynamics of contingencies. As previously mentioned, if terrestrial waters are attractors of contingencies or chemistry, then they do not merely implement solar climates but also energetic models of dynamism associated with other contingencies or cosmic climates. Accordingly, terrestrial waters develop into sites for the irruption of contingencies into the already established and interiorized contingency which in the case of the planet Earth is solar economy of the Sun and its restricted climates. Therefore, terrestrial waters are agents of complicity whereby cosmic climates irrupt into the interiority of terrestrial life itself. It is this irruption of cosmic climates that draws a line of exteriorization or loosening into the abyss for

both the terrestrial life and the climates generated by the Sun. However, the complicity between the water of life and cosmic climates or what we call chemistry is endowed with a chemical slant; it gives the death of life and water weirdly productive aspects. The irruption of cosmic climates into the terrestrial biosphere generates a dynamics of death or line of exteriorization whose expression and dynamism are chemical rather than spectral, ghostly or hauntological. The dying water is blackened into heaps of slime and the biosphere feeding on such water respectively dies or chemically loosens into the cosmic exteriority. As these deaths have chemical slants, they spawn more contingencies or lines of chemical dynamisms which render the universe climatically weird. This climatic relationship between a dying Sun and a dying Earth as chemically projected in water has been intriguingly portrayed by the artist Pamela Rosenkranz. What Rosenkranz artistically proposes is that water – despite its apparent loyalty to terrestrial life – chemically unbinds the potencies of cosmic contingencies whose inevitable irruption into our superficially solar world necessitates a chasmic terrestrial ecology.

Cosmic Ecology or the Order of the Weird

Life ecologically extinguishes as its waters die, or more accurately, as they chemically react with other cosmic contingencies whose climates are exterior to that of terrestrial life and its solar bonds. Since the expression of dying water signifies nothing but a chemical marriage between water and cosmic contingencies, ecological death means nothing but to perish via a blackening water which is too chemically potent to support the vitality of life or endurance of survival. Ecological death becomes a form of descent into the cosmic abyss which is chemically too productive to be considered either misanthropically gloomy or post-humanistically promising. This ecological

death of Earth is strongly reminiscent of Victor Hugo's description of the appalling slime pools of Paris: "[I]n a pit of slime [...] the dying man does not know whether he has become a ghost or a toad. Everywhere else the grave is sinister, here it is shapeless." (Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*)

In the slimy grips of a universal nature whose contingencies have chemically irrupted into the water of life, the ecological death of Earth is a weird chemical reaction from which no ghost emerges to either haunt the universe or demand an appropriate mourn.

Being truly terrestrial is not the same as being superficial, that is to say, it is not the same as considering Earth as a planetary surface-biosphere (slave of the Sun) or exalting the planet to the position of the Sun (solar hegemony). Being genuinely terrestrial demands presupposing the death and pure contingency of the Earth in each and every equation, thought, feat of creativity and political intervention. Earthly thought embraces perishability (i.e. cosmic contingency) as its immanent core. If the embracing of Earth's perishability should be posited as the hallmark of earthly thought, it is because such perishability – as argued earlier – grasps the openness of Earth towards the cosmic exteriority not in terms of concomitantly vitalistic / necrocratic correlations (as the Earth's relationship with the Sun) but alternative ways of dying and loosening into the cosmic abyss. By the word 'alternative', we mean those ways of exteriorization and loosening which are not dictated by the economical correlation between Earth and Sun. These alternative ways of binding cosmic exteriority or loosening into the abyss entail, firstly, a terrestrial ecology for which both Earth and Sun are bound or grasped as merely contingent and hence, necessarily perishable entities. The only true terrestrial ecology, for this reason, is the one founded on the unilateral nature of cosmic contingency against which there is no chance of resistance – there are only

opportunities for drawing schemes of complicity. To this extent, terrestrial thought and creativity must essentially be associated with ecology, but an ecology which is based on the unilateral powers of cosmic contingencies such as climate changes, singularity drives, chemical eruptions and material disintegration. Any other mode of thought basking in the visual effects of Earth as a blue marble or the Sun as the exorbitant flame is but submission to heliocentric slavery.